batsA History of the Hermitage Stream and its Tributaries
Restoration and Enhancement Projects

The Riders Stream entering a flooded Hermitage Stream at Corhampton Crescent

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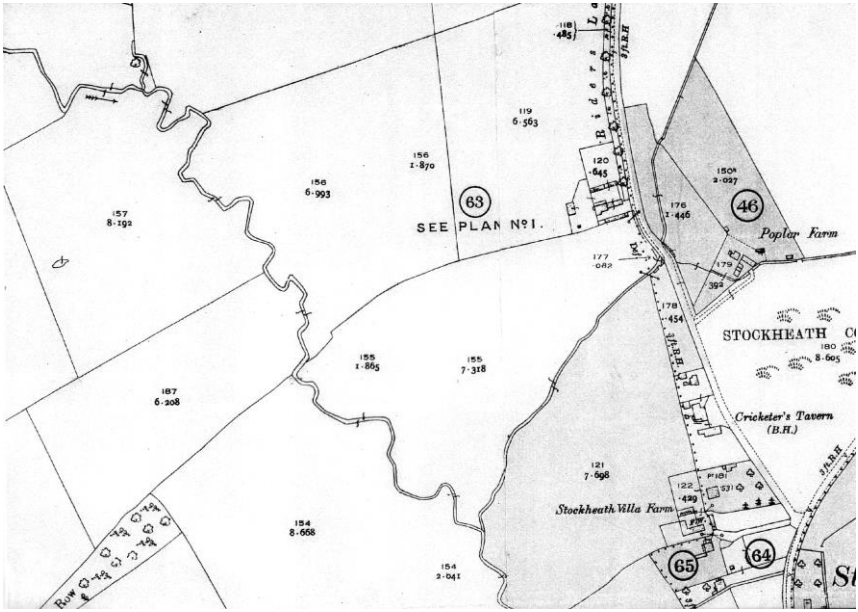
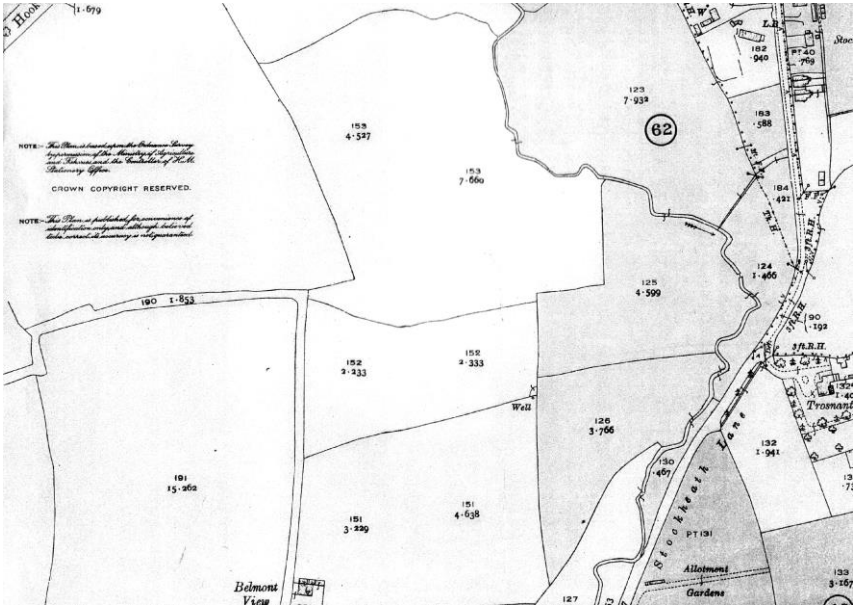


Original meandering route of the Hermitage Stream



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A History of the Hermitage Stream and its Tributaries

Robert West

Introduction

No one would ever claim that the Hermitage Stream is – or ever has been – a dramatic, picturesque or especially significant watercourse. Draining less than 70 sqkm of South East Hampshire it is, in many places, now either invisible or straitjacketed in brick or concrete with much of its course surrounded by the modern housing developments of Waterlooville and Leigh Park. But even when it flowed almost entirely through open countryside it was never a stream to enthral or inspire. Indeed the only part of its catchment area that has ever attracted the attention of the artist or the poet is the pre-housing estate Leigh Park, whose gardens and grounds as we see them today are largely the creation of Sir George Staunton in the 1820s and 30s. In about 1836 Staunton commissioned the Chichester artist J.F. Gilbert to produce a number of views of the estate, including Leigh Water, which had recently been created by damming a small headwater stream,[1] whilst in 1862 Charles Rogers Cotton also depicted Leigh Water in one of a number of watercolours which he produced after he had settled, in 1860, at Stansted College, an almshouse (now demolished) for retired and impoverished practitioners in the wine trade.

The one poet – though a decidedly amateur one – who has seen the Hermitage Stream as a fit subject is James King who, in 1829 composed *A Poem on Leigh Park*. This, however, is an almost sycophantic paean to Staunton (King was actually one of his tenants) and his descriptions of the gardens and grounds is, for modern tastes, far too florid and gushing. His treatment of the Hermitage Stream, which here is little more than a collection of unimpressive rivulets, is typical of his style, although to begin with he is rather uncharacteristically muted:

And here a dun, discoloured streamlet mark
That flows all darkly and divides the park
Crowned with its sedgy tresses see it stray
And to the murmuring ocean wend its way.

Later, however, he becomes more expansive:

How pleasingly its darksome waters flow
Chequering the scene where all is light and glow.

and further on he continues:

And here once more that winding stream we see
That rolled its sullen wave so gloomily.
Say what hath smiled these angry waves to peace
And led their hoarse-resounding murmurs to cease?
All crystal here its noiseless waters seem
With scarce a wave to break the quivering gleam.
Glassy as Truth their limpid course they run,
Bickering for joy beneath the cloudless sun.
And marvel not for here the Naiad dwells
And calms the waters with her gentle spells.
The peaceful Halcyon flies the twilight cave
To sleek her plumage in the sunny wave.
The spangled trout forsakes the river's pride
Well pleased along this humble stream to glide.[2]

And yet, in many respects, this ‘humble stream’ is indeed one of varied interest, with much to tell us about the many ways in which man has, throughout the ages, sought to control or utilise even the most modest and unpromising of watercourses.

Except for a thin coastal strip of chalk overlaid with alluvium, and another narrow band, immediately to the north of it, of Reading Beds (a complex mixture of sands, clays and gravels) the geology of the Hermitage catchment area is entirely London Clay. This means that virtually all of the rain that falls upon it becomes surface run-off, and in consequence the Hermitage Stream has a very variable flow. Prolonged drought, especially in summer, can reduce it to little more than a trickle, whilst prolonged rain can turn it into a torrent. Even a short burst of heavy rain can see its level rise dramatically in almost an instant as was demonstrated on 14 August 1955 when the Hampshire Rivers Board recorded an increase in flow from a mere

one cubic foot per second to 110 feet per cubic second in just 12 minutes after a violent storm.[3]

This volatility is to some extent mitigated by the fact that much of the land immediately adjacent to it is naturally boggy and acts like a sponge, thus regulating its flow. This is less true now than it was in earlier times, due to extensive urbanisation, but truer now than it was in the last quarter of the twentieth century, since much of its course through Leigh Park has been returned to a habitat of sloping grassy banks and reeds, after having been lined and paved with concrete in the 1970s.

A good indication of how marshy the immediate environs of the stream used to be is clearly shown on the earliest surviving map of a moderately large scale (Four inches to the mile) that includes the Havant area, McKenzie's, *General Plan of the Island of Portsea and the Gosport Side ... and Soundings of Spithead, Portsmouth and Langston Harbours* (dated 1784) which depicts an admittedly simplified and stylised Hermitage Stream but with broad strips of marsh on either side of it for virtually the whole length of its course.

This combination of volatile flow and boggy banks has meant that no settlement ever grew up on it until after the Second World War, and also ensured that it was quite unsuitable as a source of power for water mills. It is true that there were once two very important mills very close to it – Bedhampton Upper and Lower mills which have now entirely vanished (only the mill pond and the Mill House belonging to the Lower Mill survive). But these mills were located here because of the copious chalk springs which, quite coincidentally, erupt adjacent to the stream and discharge into it, dramatically increasing the volume of its flow for the last few hundred metres of its course. Indeed the close proximity of the stream, with its unpredictable volumes of often heavily polluted water was actually a significant handicap to these mills' operations.

These twin problems of flooding and pollution became even more acute after 1889 when the mills were finally abandoned and the Bedhampton springs became the largest source of supply for the Portsmouth Water Company.

McKenzie's General Plan

Indeed the Company soon took the drastic step of diverting the whole of the lower course of the Hermitage that ran past the waterworks through a large pipe which emptied directly into Langstone Harbour. This too, however, caused its own problems and eventually the course of the stream was restored, although only after major work to deepen and widen its course had been undertaken. (The pipe was retained, however, to act as a relief conduit in times of heavy flood).

In short, there has barely been a stretch of the Hermitage Stream or its headwaters which have not, at one time or another, been diverted, dammed, culverted or canalised to render it either more beautiful, more beneficial, or – at the very least – less of a nuisance.

Main Headwater: Upper Hermitage

What is usually regarded as the principle headwater of the Hermitage Stream has its origins to the north of the Queen's Inclosure, just south of Padnell Lane in the vicinity of Padnell Junior School. Before this area was developed after the Second World War there was an open watercourse here, but now the embryonic river makes its first appearance when it emerges from a culvert under Park Lane opposite Winscombe Avenue. Thereafter it meanders through the Inclosure, which is actually one of the most pleasant spots in the whole of the Hermitage basin – although it must be admitted that the modest little stream does not make a significant contribution to the picturesqueness of the scene.

The Queen's Inclosure is one of the largest and most impressive remnants of the ancient and extensive Forest of Bere. Once known as Bulls Lodge Woods it was particularly renowned for the quality of its oak timber (especially useful for shipbuilding) and rows of ‘plantation’ oaks can still be seen, as well as a number of very fine yew trees.

At the southern boundary of the Inclosure the stream turns westwards, running in what is clearly an artificially straightened channel along the edge of the gardens in Burnside, before turning south again under Highfield.
Here, until the 1960s, was Highfield Lodge, which took its name from one of

the old lodges in the Forest of Bere. The house is first recorded in l833 although there must surely have an older property on the site. Old maps show that the stream was once dammed here to form ponds. These were certainly ornamental features in the grounds of the house although they may have originally been medieval fish ponds.[4] Now, however, all traces of house, grounds and ponds have vanished beneath the late twentieth-century housing, and the stream can now only be glimpsed briefly as it passes under Highfield at the end of Billett Avenue (named after John Billett the first owner of Highfield Lodge). It then flows southward towards Hulbert Road and turns east under Ferndale and Tempest Avenue before re-emerging at Outhurst Wood, another remnant of the Forest of Bere. Here the stream is noticeably more mature than in the Queen's Inclosure and has cut quite a steep-sided valley through the soft clay. It forms the focus of a circular walk, created in 1998, which runs along each bank with a footbridge over the stream at the southern end. As in the Queen's Inclosure there is some impressively mature woodland here. The stream soon disappears once more however, this time under the A3M, constructed in the 1970s, and then under the service road for the new Dunsbury Business Park (on the site of Dunsbury Hill Farm) which, at the time of writing (2019) is still in the early stages of development. It can only be picked up again on the south side of this new road where it re-emerges in an open space between Bushy Lease (another Forest of Bere survival) and the open ground to the west of Ramsdale Avenue in the Warren Park area. Just north of Park House Farm Way it receives a culverted stream that drains Bushy Lease, and here, too, we first encounter the measures taken in the 1970s to prevent flooding by lining the bed and banks with concrete and paving. (This will be dealt with below). It then crosses under Park House Farm Way and can be followed along a tarmac footpath and cycleway between Park Community School and Keyhaven Drive.

It then flows under Middle Park Way where it receives its first major tributary, the Park Lane stream.

Park Lane Stream

This has its origin in two main headwaters.

The western branch used to rise in Hazleton Wood, but this has now been felled and replaced by the Hazleton Way housing estate, and so today the stream makes its first appearance when it emerges from a pipe on the eastern side of Greenfield Crescent. It then crosses under Sheepwash Lane, in reality now no more than a bridleway although it is an ancient track leading from Horndean to Padnell. It then flows through the Waterlooville Golf Club course and here forms two small lakes (originally there were three, the smallest central one having been lost). It has been speculated that these were medieval fish ponds, but as they do not appear on the 1838 Blendworth Tithe Map they must have been excavated sometime between then and 1897 when they are shown on the large-scale Ordnance Survey map. It is possible that they were dug for clay for the nearby Padnell Brick Works although the land was actually part of Blendworth Common. But it is more likely that they were created for purely recreational purposes since the 1897 map shows a Boat House on the banks of the larger (easternmost) one. For whose benefit, however, is uncertain. The nearest large house is Padnell Grange, the residence in the nineteenth century of the Dotterill family, but, as has been mentioned, the land is not part of the Padnell estate, and in the nineteenth century was actually the property of the Jervoise family.

Having passed through the golf course the stream then crosses under the A3M and enters the surviving portion of Blendworth Common where it is joined by the eastern headwater.

This rises in the Hazleton Farm area immediately to the west of the main Havant – Horndean Road (B2149) although older maps (e.g. the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6") show that it once had its origins further to the east in Holt Wood. (The Blendworth Tithe Map, rather curiously, does not show it at all, presumably because, unlike the western branch, it did not delineate any field boundaries). It then flows west and then south along the eastern side of the A3M, where its course was clearly diverted when the road was constructed in the 1970s. It then joins the western branch and the unified stream now flows

south-east across Blendworth Common, a remote (and now publicly inaccessible) tract of land: surprisingly given how close it is to the heavily urbanised Waterlooville. On Blendworth Common it is joined by another small stream, coming in from the north-east, which rises to the south of Hazleton Farm. In the 1970s – presumably at the same time as the A3M was being constructed, a series of weirs built along this seemingly insignificant little rivulet to help regulate the flow of water after heavy rain.

Having received this tributary the stream then flows south into Bells Copse, yet another Forest of Bere remnant. But it is only when it emerges from the Copse, to the west of the area with the somewhat unprepossessing name of Cabbagefield Row, that it can be easily followed. It then crosses under Calshot Road, which marks the northern perimeter of the modern Leigh Park housing estate, and enters a remarkably deep and narrow valley, wooded on both sides. Next to it is a footpath leading to the Warren Dam.

It was probably around this area that two medieval fishponds associated with Bedhampton Deer Park were located. The causeway which carries Calshot Road over the stream follows the line of an embankment (marked on the Bedhampton Tithe Map) which may well have been a dam that created a pond immediately to the north of Calshot Road, whilst a second pond may have been formed directly below this by another dam around the area of the present flood defence scheme, although here the ground has been so much altered by modern landscaping that it is difficult to distinguish what may well have been older work.[5]

Bedhampton Deer Park itself covered a very large area of some 1200 acres, comprising almost all of the northern part of the parish of Bedhampton, and was enclosed by a ditch with a circumference of about six and a half miles. It contained not only the fishponds but also a rabbit warren from which this particular part of the Leigh Park housing estate takes its name. It is not known exactly when it was created, although it was sometime between Domesday and the early 13th century, and was disparked by 1632. It was then converted to arable and pasture, although, of course, the landscape that we see today is of a radically different nature and not a trace of anything remains from before the

middle of the twentieth century.

The present Warren Dam replaced a concrete structure known as the Giant Steps which was built in 1966, when the present Warren Park estate was being developed. This was a truly massive edifice, seemingly quite out of proportion with the modest little stream against which it was erected to provide flood protection. By 2009 however it had reached the end of its useful life and needed replacing. Indeed the whole of the surrounding area had become thoroughly run-down and prone to vandalism. So the decision was made to remove the Steps altogether, open up the stream (although a sluice gate which could be closed in times of exceptional flood was installed) and re-landscape the whole area, creating a new playground and skateboard park. This work was completed in 2010.

Below the Warren Dam the stream runs underground for several hundred metres beneath the playing fields of the Park Community School and only re-emerges when it joins the main branch of the river at Middle Park Way.

South of Middle Park Way

South of Middle Park Way the stream flows through an area now known as the Hermitage Stream Open Space, where the watercourse has been freed from its concrete straitjacket. The banks are grassy and gently sloping and there is a profusion of reeds and rushes. Moreover there are footpaths, benches and generous amounts of green space on either side, giving an almost rural feel to this particular part of the Leigh Park estate.

This is probably the most significant improvement that was made as part of the Hermitage Stream Project, an initiative launched by the Havant Borough Council in association with the Environment Agency in 1992. Work began in 1995 with an estimated budget of £40-50,000, the work being spread over a ten year period.

The Hermitage Stream Project was in fact the third of the various schemes to deal with the stream once the Leigh Park estate had been created.
The first phase, in the early 1950s, was to simply broaden and deepen the existing channels to cope with the increased run-off that the building of

several thousand new houses would generate. At the beginning of 1951 the Hampshire Rivers Board agreed to spend £20,000 on this work.[6] Proof that this was necessary came that autumn when exceptionally heavy rain led to serious flooding in Chalton Crescent and at Stockheath.[7] This work was completed by the summer of 1953 and a second stage, costing £12,000 was completed by 1957.[8]

The second phase took place in the 1970s, when the decision was made to line the bed and banks of the stream at Leigh lark with concrete and paving. This reflected the prevailing orthodoxy amongst water engineers at this time that the best method of dealing with flood water in river systems in urban areas was to convey it away as quickly as possible, and if this meant turning watercourses such as the Hermitage into little more than open dams then this was the price that would have to be paid. In 1973 therefore the Hampshire Rivers Authority (the successor to the Hampshire River Board) began the work, with an initial budget of £300,000.[9] But however effective this strategy might have been from a practical point of view its aesthetic impact was disastrous.

By the 1990s however a different approach had become fashionable. Now, instead of trying to get rid of flood water as quickly as possible, it was felt much more desirable to adopt a more natural approach and turn the immediate environs of the watercourse into a sort of sponge to soak up the excess water and allow it to be released once the river level had subsided. Hence, on this part of the Hermitage, the gently sloping grassy banks and the profusion of reed and other water-loving vegetation. This is a no less effective answer to the problem but aesthetically, as well as environmentally, it is a huge improvement.

South of Purbrook Way however the dismal concrete returns, and a little further downstream, near Priorsdean Crescent, the second major tributary, the Riders Lane Stream, joins the main river.

Riders Lane Stream

This begins as a number of small rivulets which drain the largely boggy ground of Havant Thicket and these would be of little interest save for the fact that some of them have been utilised to create features in the landscape of the pre-housing estate Leigh Park.

Leigh Water

By far the most important and well known of these is the lake known as Leigh Water, which formed the centrepiece of Sir George Staunton's gardens and around which he arranged many of his statues, monuments and follies. Sir George's own *Notices of the Leigh Park Estate* provide an account of the lake's creation and original appearance that cannot be improved upon:

> *The Leigh Water is wholly artificial. No accumulation of water originally existed in this spot; and the floods, which occasionally took*

place after heavy rains, were discharged immediately by the water-course which traverses the estate. Mr. Garret formed here a small pond, of a few yards in diameter, for the purposes of watering cattle. The pond remained in this state until the year 1828, when the enlargement of it was commenced, upon there being every reason to expect that the springs and drains from the high grounds within the Park would afford an adequate supply of water to fill the excavation. The success of the first experiment led to further enlargements and embankments and it was finally completed in the present year.[1836]

Not merely content with creating a sheet of water however, Staunton further embellished it in the following manner:

Three islands have been formed:

1. The Swan Island where the swans are housed.
2. The Cottage Island, upon which is the cottage of an under-gardener who has charge of this department.
3. The Fort Island, upon which a battery has been built of Purbeck stone, pierced for nine guns, and displaying on a red pole the Imperial yellow Flag of China.
There are five bridges on the water:

1. The Chinese Bridge consisting of three brick arches, with Chinese gate-ways, over which are displayed four inscriptions in Chinese characters, which may be translated as follows:

Lin chee wha yuen - Thicket water flower garden.
Han fa mei kiao - Chinese style ornamental bridge.
Tsing tsin yeu wan - Please to enter; amused, ramble.
Pin gun jon yee - Health, peace, wishes accomplished.

2. The Corinthian Bridge; a brick bridge, of one arch, surmounted with a Corinthian Portico, placed across the chief outlet.

3.4.5. Small Bridges - one placed across the inlet from the North; another across the opening to the Thicket, and a third communicating with the Fort Island.[10]

Today very little of this survives. The islands no longer have their swanneries, cottages or forts and the only remaining bridge is the one giving access to Fort Island.

At the south-east corner the stream that feeds the lake (which rises a short distance away in Hammonds Land Copse) is, for the last few metres, lined with brick and the remains of a brick weir and a sluice can still be seen. There are also traces of artificial channels, dug to allow extra rainwater to feed into the lake nearby.

The outlet is on the western side of the lake and from here the stream flows south to join the other principal headwater just to the north of Middle Park Way. Near here, in Thicket Lawn, there used to be another water feature, described in Staunton's *Notices* as:

> *…a spring of pure water, paved and inclosed with iron hurdles. Above it is the well-known Greek inscription for a font which may be read either backwards or forwards: – which may be translated: Cleanse thy faults, not thy face only.*[11]

This, too, has disappeared. A little water still occasionally seeps out from the foot of the steep slope in High Lawn, but the spring site itself is no more than a clump of trees, bushes and scrub, with no sign of any enclosure or inscription. The water now simply drains away into the ground, but the course of the channel that once conveyed the water from the spring to the stream draining from Leigh Water can still be seen.

The other feature to be created from a Riders Lane stream headwater is the Upper Lake, a few hundred metres to the north of Leigh Water. This, however, was not the work of Sir George Staunton but rather of William Stone after he had acquired Leigh Park in 1861 and had enclosed Havant Thicket (a lengthy process begun in 1864 and only fully completed in 1870) which turned it into his own private playground. It was probably used for swimming, but nobody would want to swim in it today for it is now a gloomy, forlorn and stagnant pool to which few walkers or cyclists in the Staunton Country lark probably pay much attention.

The stream which feeds this pool is one of two that meet on Deerslaughter

Plain and join the Leigh Water stream just north of Middle Park Way.

It is possible; however, that in the future the whole of this area will be dramatically transformed if the Portsmouth Water Company's plans to create the Havant Thicket Winter Storage Reservoir between Warren Park and the Staunton Country Park go ahead.

Proposed water storage reservoir

The Water Company actually acquired the land (some 160 hectares) as long ago as 1965, but it was not until 2004 that serious consideration was given to a proposed reservoir, and by 2008, after consultation with various bodies including the local Council, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission, the scheme looked likely to go ahead. But then the plans were shelved, and it is only quite recently that the idea has been revived. At time of writing (2019) it is intended that the scheme should be completed by 2029) but as yet no work has been commenced. However some preliminary tree planting in connection with the reservoir has been carried out.

The aim would be to create a huge reservoir, about one mile east to west and half a mile north to south, with a capacity of about 8,700 million litres. The water would be taken from the copious Bedhampton springs, which provide more than enough to meet current and future anticipated demands, the surplus at present simply being discharged into the Hermitage Stream. There are also proposals to landscape the whole area and provide various recreational activities.

On the northern side of Middle Park Way is the first flood control point on the stream, with a debris screen to prevent large objects being carried further downstream, and having crossed under the road the stream enters Great Copse, another area of ancient woodland, which has some very fine specimens of mature trees. Here was located a kitchen garden known as Little Hacketts which may originally have belonged to a dwelling that pre-dated the very first Leigh Park house, although the exact location of this building is unknown. Sir George Staunton decided to create an Arbour here, as a memorial to his mother, but all traces of this, too, have vanished save for some remnants of a small single-arch brick bridge which can be seen beneath the modern footbridge over the stream which has been somewhat prosaically constructed out of old railway sleepers.[12] The banks of the stream are also lined here with four or five courses of brick – clearly 19th Century – for about ten metres or so each side of the bridge. The large-scale O.S. map of 1870 also marks a 'waterfall' here, but no signs of this can be seen today.

From Great Copse the stream can be followed on foot practically all the way down to its junction with the main river at Corhampton Crescent. There are two more flood control points with debris screens along the way, the first on the north side of Dunsbury Way, the second on the north side of Purbrook Way. For the last forty or fifty metres of its course the banks are lined with concrete.

Lower Hermitage

For virtually the whole of the rest of its course the bed and banks of the stream are once more lined with either brick, concrete or paving, and although it can be followed by footpaths on both banks as it passes through an area of open ground between Stockheath Lane and Barncroft Way it is once more of little aesthetic interest.

Just before it crosses under Barncroft Way can be seen the outfall of the Lavant Stream Relief Pipe. This was constructed between 1954 and 1962 as part of a scheme to deal with the occasionally severe problems that can arise on the nearby Lavant stream in times of exceptionally high rainfall. It has its opening where the Lavant crosses under Crossland Drive, about 1km. to the

east. The pipe is 1.37 metres in diameter and can cope with a flow of up to 3 cubic metres per second. The fact that it was now deemed perfectly safe to deposit such large amounts of water into the Hermitage Stream in an area (Stockheath) which in the past had been notoriously prone to flooding is eloquent testimony to how successful the improvement work on the stream had been in the 1950s. Indeed the stream here flows between generously wide and deep banks, enabling it to cope with almost any amount of flood water.

The stream then passes under New Road and shortly afterwards takes a significant diversion to allow it to pass under the Chichester to Portsmouth railway line at right angles, rather than obliquely, as its natural course would have done. This work was presumably carried out when the railway was constructed in 1847.

Immediately south of the railway, between it and West Street bridge, is the entrance to the Diversion Pipe, constructed by the Portsmouth Water Company to take the stream away from the springs at Bedhampton Water Works. This will be dealt with below.

The West Street bridge, known traditionally as the Hermitage Bridge, is a comparatively modern, utilitarian structure, the latest in what must be a very long line of bridges carrying the main coast road between Havant and Cosham, although very little is known about any of the previous ones. Not far from it, on the north-eastern side, was located the Hermitage from which our stream derives its name. This was not, however, its original name, for in a 10th Century Charter delineating the boundaries of Havant Parish the stream is called "ocerburna" (i.e. Ocer stream). The origin of this name is uncertain, but one thing is clear, it does not, as some have speculated, derive from the word ochre, meaning reddish-brown. It is true that, after heavy rain, the stream does often take on a distinctly brownish hue due to the clay that is washed into it, but ochre is a word of Middle English origin and cannot, therefore, appear in an Anglo Saxon document. A recent study of the Charter by Susan Kelly has tentatively suggested that ‘ocer’ could be a corruption of the Old English ‘oter’ (otter) but this is no more than guesswork.

The Hermitage from which the stream derives its modern name was located on

or near its eastern bank just to the north of the main Havant – Cosham road. Almost nothing is known about it, although it was certainly in existence by 1496 when Bishop Langton of Winchester granted permission for a hermit here to receive alms, not only for his own needs, but also to maintain the upkeep of the bridge. (A similar arrangement existed at Emsworth where the coast road bridged the River Ems.) It was dedicated to St James – probably St James the Great as he was the patron saint of pilgrims. It cannot have long survived the Reformation although 'Le Harmytage' is still shown on a map of Bedhampton dated to circa1580. The name, however, remained attached to the area (about two acres in extent) long after the Hermitage itself had disappeared. In a Perambulation of the Bounds of Havant conducted in September 1520, for example, it is called Hermitage Croft,[13] and the name also appears on the 1861 Census where 'Hermitage' is listed as a distinct district within Havant Parish. It contained just four dwellings, all working class cottages, with a total of 17 inhabitants. Curiously, however, the name does not appear on the 1842 Tithe Map where the area is simply a field called Pasture Piece.

But it must always have been a parcel of land with some significance because the parish boundary here used to take a very curious course to incorporate it into Havant rather than Bedhampton, which circumvents it on its western, northern and eastern sides. The boundary followed the Hermitage Stream northwards all the way from the estuary at Broadmarsh up past Hermitage Bridge for a hundred metres or so before turning first east, then south down Staunton Road (itself an ancient trackway) until it met West Street. It then ran eastwards along West Street before turning north again at the modern Boundary Way. That this is an ancient boundary is attested to by the Anglo Saxon Charter which, although difficult to interpret exactly, does clearly indicate that the boundary line only deviated from the stream north of the Hermitage Bridge. This boundary was only altered in the early 20th Century when the whole of the area on the north side of West Street between Staunton Road and Boundary Way was transferred from Bedhampton to Havant.

Below Hermitage Bridge the now thoroughly canalised stream passes through the grounds of the Bedhampton Water Works belonging to the Portsmouth

Water Company and it is in this area that the stream has caused the most acute problems.

The Portsmouth Water Company was formed in 1857 and opened its first Water Works in Brockhampton Road in 1860. Initially it used only the Brockhampton springs as its source of supply, but even by the 1860s it had secured the purchase of the two Bedhampton mills, and much of the land surrounding them, with an eye to utilising the far more copious Bedhampton springs at a later date. By the 1880s the demand for the Company's water - which now supplied not only Portsmouth but also Havant, Emsworth and Cosham - had indeed increased sufficiently to necessitate the construction of the Bedhampton Works, the first phase of which opened in 1889. But the immediate proximity of the Hermitage Stream and its unwholesome waters was a major cause for concern. It must always, to some degree, have been a convenient dump for all kinds of waste matter, but with so little human habitation in its immediate vicinity this had not, for most of the time, been a huge problem. But by the last quarter of the 19th Century housing had begun to creep ever more closely to it, most especially in the new and rapidly expanding settlement of Waterlooville but also at the western end of Havant, with dwellings appearing around the western part of West Street as well as in Staunton Road and Knox Road. Consequently by the 1880s the stream had become little more than an open sewer, and it was actually the foul state of the watercourse which was the catalyst for Havant to acquire – eventually – a proper comprehensive mains drainage scheme.

Following a serious outbreak of enteric fever in Bedhampton in the autumn of 1895 two army officers garrisoned at Hilsea Barracks, Major Maycock and Surgeon-Major Porter, decided to conduct their own investigations into the sanitary conditions surrounding the Bedhampton springs. They were, to say the least, unimpressed and *from the facts that came under their observation they arrived at the conclusion that there existed a considerable risk of dangerous pollution of the Portsmouth water supply.* Indeed so alarmed were they that they wrote a report which their superiors at the War Office passed on to the Local Government Board who, in turn, sent down one of their most senior officials, Dr. Theodore Thomson, to conduct his own investigations in

March 1897.

Thomson's Report *The Conditions Topographical, Geological and Sanitary of the Havant Districts (Urban and Rural) and their Relation with the Sources of the Borough of Portsmouth's Company Water Supply*[14] which was published on 14 October 1897 more than confirmed all of Maycock and Porter's findings.

As to the condition of the Hermitage Stream Thomson wrote:

> *This stream receives at a point about three miles above the waterworks the sewage of a considerable part of Waterlooville. Before discharge into the Hermitage Stream this sewage undergoes no treatment other than passing through a couple of tanks where some subsidence takes place... it also receives about 300 yards above the point at which it passes the springs of the Bedhampton Waterworks the sewage of several houses of that part of the village of East Bedhampton (sic) through which the stream flows.*[15]

As to the purity of the water in the springs themselves he found, when he inspected them on 8 March, that, although the water issuing from the spring known as St Chad's Well was perfectly clear *the water in the Blue Hole collecting basins and in two other collecting basins was observed to be turbid.*[16]

However he could not be certain whether the discolouration was caused by pollution from the Hermitage Stream itself or by contaminated ground water. (The purity of the Brockhampton springs, which were similarly threatened by the foul state of the Brockhampton Stream, was equally a cause for concern.)
This was by no means the first official enquiry into the sanitary condition of the Havant area and the possible impact that its polluted watercourses might have upon the Portsmouth Water Company's supply – indeed Thomson himself had conducted one just three years earlier – but the impact of all these enquiries, and the reports that resulted from them had been non-existent. Havant and Waterlooville remained without mains drainage schemes and their local politicians – much to the exasperation of the Portsmouth Water Company and most of its customers – seemed firmly resolved not to provide them.

Exactly what the fate of this latest report might have been under normal circumstances it is impossible to say; but circumstances in the autumn of 1897 were not, by any means, normal, for Britain was in the middle of what was probably the most serious typhoid epidemic of the entire 19th Century, at Maidstone in Kent. It had begun in August, and by the time it finally abated in January 1898 there had been 1910 reported cases and 123 fatalities. But the worst week of all, with 262 cases and 23 fatalities, was the very week in which Thomson's Report was published. And the cause of the outbreak? The pollution of the Maidstone Water Company's supply from chalk springs which had been contaminated by sewage leaking into them from a nearby hop-pickers camp. The parallels with the situation at Havant and Bedhampton could not have been closer.

Thomson's report therefore caused a sensation. The *Portsmouth Evening News* deemed it so important that it decided to print it in its entirety over six consecutive issues from 4 November onwards and declared, in one of several censorious editorials that:

> *The grave character of the report cannot be disregarded, and it is evident that the most important works will have to be undertaken without delay in order that the purity of the water may be maintained.*[17]

Portsmouth Borough Council was equally alarmed and held an Extraordinary General Meeting on 2 November to discuss the report during the course of which one councillor declared that: *even as they debated the issue possibly thousands of our townsmen are being poisoned*.[18]

It is true that more than a decade was to elapse before Havant finally got mains drainage – and even longer before Waterlooville followed suit – but it was Thomson's Report, and the events surrounding it, that made their eventual installation inevitable.

Even before Thomson's report was published however the Portsmouth Water Company was already well under way to providing its own solution to the problem of safeguarding the purity of the Bedhampton springs, by the construction of a five foot diameter pipe to carry the whole of the Hermitage

Stream underground from a point midway between the railway line and the Hermitage Bridge to the tidal estuary in Langstone Harbour. (Thomson himself was aware of this scheme and was confident that it would be a most effective remedy.)

The Company had had plans for some sort of diversion scheme as early as 1881 and two years later it obtained the necessary legal powers to permit it to block up the natural course of the stream and divert the water through a pipe.[19] But subsequent negotiations with the Havant Urban and Rural Sanitary Authorities, mainly concerning the purchase of land and questions of compensation, were both protracted and acrimonious – just one of the many examples of the long-standing animosity between the Company and the Havant local authorities – and by 1895 the Company felt compelled to obtain a new Act of Parliament to give it powers of compulsory purchase of the land that they required. This, too, was resolutely opposed by the newly-created Havant Urban and Rural District Councils, and early in February 1896 a meeting was actually called to discuss the possibility of fighting the Company's new Bill in Parliament. The resolution to oppose it was carried by thirteen votes to one, the principle objection to the scheme being that *there would, perhaps, be a hindrance to the drainage of the district.*[20]

But it did little good; the Bill received the Royal Assent in July, and when the Company held its half-yearly Shareholders' Meeting in November it could be reported that:

> *... land is being purchased, and a tender has been accepted for the execution of the works in connection with the Hermitage Stream. These works are now in active progress*.[21]

By the time Thomson's Report was published a year later the work was all but complete, and at the half-yearly Shareholders' Meeting in November 1897 it could be stated that:

> *The works in connection with the diversion of the Hermitage Stream are now finished, and the connections therewith, which have been somewhat delayed owing to the negotiations respecting the same with the Havant Rural Sanitary Authority will now very shortly be completed.*[22]

But in reality the pipe was not, after all, the ideal solution, the main problem being that it simply was not large enough to cope with the torrent that the stream could become after heavy rains. There had been concerns raised about this long before the pipe was even laid – indeed it had been one of the objections raised at the February 1896 meeting – but the Company, for whatever reason, chose to ignore them, or at least merely decided to increase the diameter of the pipe to five feet from the originally proposed four.

The first notable flooding resulting from the pipe's inadequacies seems to have occurred in May 1903 when, following four inches of rain in just eleven days the Bedhampton springs were inundated, and only the prompt action of the Works Engineer prevented this contaminated water from getting into the public supply. A similar incident occurred in May 1904, although, this time, the springs themselves were saved from inundation. But the most serious occurrence took place on 3 January 1906, and the best account of it comes from the Report written by Portsmouth's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Mearns Fraser who visited the Waterworks the following day and found most of the springs polluted and the water quite unfit for public consumption.

> *The flood was subsiding at the time of my visit and an opening had been made in the protecting bank to allow the water to escape through the Company's conduits and so to the sea. The flood was washing through the works at such a rate that it carried a large portion of the principle road away and was rushing across the road nearly a foot deep. The springs, collecting basins and conduits were completely flooded by the Hermitage Stream, and the rush of surface water that accompanied it.*

He returned the following day (5th) and:

> *By that time the flood had subsided and water was again being pumped into the town from the Bedhampton works. That is to say, although the springs were flooded with polluted waters yet within twenty four hours the water was again being sent to Portsmouth.*[23]

The result was that the water coming out of people's taps for the next few days was extremely discoloured. This was a state of affairs which Mearns Fraser (who was a long-standing critic of both the Water Company and the Havant

local authorities) clearly found astonishing.

The response of the Water Company, however, was simply to dig a relief channel parallel to the pipe to convey away any water that the pipe could not cope with in times of flood. This did, however, appear to work quite well, and no other inundation of the springs seems to have occurred thereafter.

The condition of the Hermitage Stream did not improve until after 1910 when Havant at last acquired a proper comprehensive mains drainage system (Waterlooville acquired one a short time afterwards) but the problem of pollution did not entirely disappear even then. As late as 1930 eighteen cases of enteric fever were recorded amongst children who had drunk water from the Hermitage Stream in Stakes Wood which had been polluted by a leakage from the Waterlooville Sewage Works (then located on the north side of Hulbert Road opposite the cemetery). It was an incident deemed serious enough to be raised at the Annual Conference of the British Waterworks Association in Belfast the following year.[24]

It was only in the 1950s, after the extensive work to broaden, deepen and canalise the channel between the pipe entrance and the waterworks had been carried out, that it was deemed safe enough to restore the Hermitage Stream to its original course, retaining the pipe merely as a safety valve to take away excess water – a function it fulfils to this day. Fortunately the possibility of the Bedhampton springs being contaminated by the Hermitage Stream is now very remote indeed.

It is only when the stream has reached the Waterworks grounds and received the overflow from the springs that it returns, albeit briefly, to its natural condition. It then flows first past the waterworks and then the Mill Pond that belonged to the now vanished Bedhampton Lower Mill. Here it receives, although only indirectly, its only significant tributary, a watercourse known either as the Bedhampton Stream or the Brookside Road Stream.

This has its source in the chalk springs that emerge from the foot of Portsdown Hill to the north of Belmont Castle. It then flows due east along the foot of the chalk ridge, crossing under the A3M in a culvert, turning south and then re-appearing briefly at the junction of Portsdown View and Brooklands Road. It

then disappears once more into a culvert which runs under Brooklands Road, Maylands Road and Brookside Road. Originally there was just one pipe to carry the water, but this did not prove adequate to deal with floods (caused in part by increased surface run-off as a consequence of ever-expanding urbanisation) and a second pipe had to be laid. Subsequently a third pipe was added as well to create additional capacity as far as Penhurst Road. The stream re-emerges half way down Brookside Road, flowing in an open channel between the east side of the roadway and the houses. It then crosses under Bidbury Lane, after which it splits into two (although one of these channels is artificial) and flows across a piece of open ground before re-uniting and crossing under first Mill Lane and then the railway line. It then empties into the Mill Pond and the overflow from this pond (comprising mainly of more surplus water from the Bedhampton springs) then feeds into the Hermitage Stream.

Considerably swelled by this new intake of water the Hermitage Stream then passes underneath the Havant bypass, after which the banks are once more lined with paving. Just below the bypass bridge can be seen the outfall of the diversion pipe and beyond this is the bridge carrying Harts Farm Way.

The stream finishes its course by discharging into Langstone Harbour on the western side of the quay where the ships dredging the bed of the Solent for sand and gravel unload their hauls.

This is scarcely a memorable end to the stream's journey. Indeed along the whole of its course there is very little that can be said to be either memorable or beautiful, and in all too many cases it and its environs are distinctly mundane – or worse. In consequence few of the tens of thousands of people who live in its catchment area probably pay it very much attention and even fewer – if any – regard it with the slightest degree of affection. But if it is not a loveable stream it is a far from negligible one, and for a watercourse of such modest size it demonstrates an extraordinary variety of features that must be of interest to anyone who wishes to understand the local landscape and the impact that human habitation has had upon it.

Notes

1 For Gilbert see Derek Gladwyn *Leigh Park: A Nineteenth Century Pleasure Ground* p. 179-81
2 James King *A Poem On Leigh Park* (1829)
3 *Portsmouth Evening News* 5 Nov. 1955
4 Steve Jones *The Early Years of Waterlooville: 1810-1910* p.38-39
5 John Pile *A Note on Two Medieval Fish Ponds at Bedhampton* Hampshire *Field Club Newsletter*: New Series 13. Spring 1990. p.14-15
6 *Portsmouth Evening News* 10 Feb. 1951
7 *Portsmouth Evening News* 19 Nov. 1951
8 *Hampshire Telegraph* 8 Feb. 1957
9 *Hampshire Rivers Authority Annual Report 1973* p.21 (Hampshire County Records Office 11A05/A2)
10 *Notices of the Leigh Park Estate, Near Havant* (1836). Reprinted in Steve Jones *Leigh Park Estate: Garden Features and Follies* p.28.
11 Ibid, p.27
12 Steve Jones *Leigh Park Estate: Garden Features and Follies* p.40-42
13 Charles Longcroft *'Hundred of Bosmere'* (1,57) p.27-30
14 *Portsmouth Evening News* 4 Nov. 1897. The springs, of course, supplied the water for their own barracks at Hilsea
15 Report p.7-8
16 Ibid. p.12
17 *Portsmouth Evening News* 15 Oct. 1897
18 *Portsmouth Evening News* 3. Nov. 1897
19 Under the Portsmouth Water Company Act (1883). Portsmouth Water Company Archive 129A/S6/6. (Portsmouth History Centre)
20 *Hampshire Telegraph* 8 Feb. 1896
21 *Hampshire Telegraph* 21 Nov. 1896
22 *Portsmouth Evening News* 16 Nov. 1897
23 Report Presented to the Health Committee of the Portsmouth Borough Council. Minutes for 1906 p.127-28. (Portsmouth History Centre). From which the information about the 1903 and 1904 floods is also derived.
24 *Belfast News Letter* 23 July 1931

Hermitage Stream Catchment Area

TOPOGRAPHY – The Hermitage Stream catchment of 19 square km. comprises mainly Tertiary deposits of London Clay and Reading Beds with some Upper Chalk outcropping on the coast. The area extends from the Queens Inclosure and Havant Thicket in the north to Langstone Harbour in the south. The Hermitage Stream catchment includes three branches, being the Park Lane Stream, the Riders Lane Stream, and the geographically separate Brookside Road stream at Bedhampton (which serves the eastern end of Portsdown Hill).

Environment Agency Main Rivers

HERMITAGE STREAM - The head of the main river is at the point where the Stream leaves the Queens Inclosure in Cowplain. This watercourse is the source of the Hermitage Stream and has its head in the Queens Inclosure at Cowplain, fed by sources now subsumed within the public surface water sewerage system of the Padnell estate. This heavily wooded area has altered little in the last three decades except for its increased usage by the public as a recreation and amenity area.

The stream runs from east to west along the southern edge of the Inclosure and acts as a natural barrier between the woodland and the developed areas to the south. Where it turns south at Highfield Avenue it is joined by a minor watercourse from Park Wood. Continuing southwards, the watercourses runs through a natural steep sided valley leading to the Hulbert Road, partly culverted at beneath the dual carriageway section of this major transport corridor. Approximately 80% of this area is now developed and almost all of the existing woodland has been lost. There are various groundwater and land drainage problems of a minor nature associated with the local geology, terrain, and interruption of the natural land drainage due to the development of the area which gives rise to flooding from springs and groundwater movement.

An improvement scheme up to Ramsdale Avenue in Leigh Park was completed in 1977 to allow for an in bank flow of up to 24 cumecs (at the down-stream end). The improvement scheme consisted of the construction of some 820 metres of earth channel, 3.2 kilometres of concrete lined channel with bank revetment in concrete blocks, various alterations and additions to highway and private bridges and structures, and the provision of an additional culvert under the Portsmouth - Havant

railway line. The channel is designed to take predicted 1 in 50 year catchment flows. The lower reaches (below Barncroft Way) are also designed to accept a transferred flow of up to 3 cumecs from the adjoining catchment's main river, the Lavant, via the pipe link from Crossland Drive.

The Environment Agency recalculated the Hermitage Stream catchment in 1998, and the results were used when redesigning the central reach of the river through Leigh Park (between the Riders Lane stream confluence and Middle Park Way) as a natural open channel. This was completed in 1999 in a project jointly funded by HBC and the Environment Agency.

Environment Agency Telemetry – to give early warning of potential flood events caused by blocked / obstructed river grillages, the Environment Agency monitors water level on the Hermitage Stream upstream of the New Road bridge

PARK LANE STREAM – This main river originally had its source at Padnell Cuts Wood, now the Hazleton Way Estate. The stream passes through a natural valley running under the A3M and south to Blendworth Common and The Warren, from where it is enmained. Its lower reaches are culverted through St Clares Avenue open space, Sunwood Road and Overton Crescent before issuing into the Hermitage Stream just downstream of Middle Park Way. The watercourse drains the housing conurbation of the Warren and the western area of Leigh Park.

Havant Borough Council purchased St Clares open space (which includes the Warren) from Portsmouth City Council in April 1992 and so became the responsible landowner of the watercourse between Woolston Road and the Warren Dam. This transferred to the Environment Agency upon the enmainment of the Stream in 2005. They carry out a programme of planned maintenance to meet its land drainage obligations to provide for the free flow of water in the stream and to clear the grill protecting the entrance to the Dam.

At the foot of the open section lies the 'Giant Steps' area, named after the now-removed Warren Dam. This was a set of weirs with a flow control penstock. This structure was removed by the Environment Agency in 2009, although the replacement land form and grillage arrangements provides an equivalent level of flood protection. The culverted section of watercourse downstream of the Dam remains in the ownership of Portsmouth City Council, until it reaches Middle Park Way and ultimately

outfalls to the Hermitage Stream.

RESERVOIRS ACT 1975 – THE WARREN DAM – This structure was designed to control the discharge of flood waters from the northern part of the catchment into the culverted section south of St Clares open space, and comprised an earth embankment with weirs, through which passed a culvert controlled by a penstock gate. Due to the amount of water it could impound, annual inspections as required under Section 10 of the Reservoirs Act 1975 were required.

Due to considerable vandalism and dereliction to the weir during the late 1990s, the penstock winding gear was been removed and the penstock itself was fixed half open to control the down-stream flow. Maintenance work in 2002 and 2003 resulted in an easier to maintain structure. Inspection of the dam passed to the Environment Agency upon enmainment in 2005, and they brought forward proposals to remove it and replace it with a much more open landform, whilst still providing the same flood protection to neighbouring properties.

RIDERS LANE STREAM – This main river has its head in a fan of minor issues between the Avenue, Longwood and Furzy Plain within Havant Thicket, and Hammond Hands Copse to the east of Leigh Park Lake (Staunton Country Park). The two main arms of these sub-tributaries join just north of Middle Park Way (from where the main river designation starts, since 2005) flowing south and west through Great Copse to Dunsbury Way, then south and east via Riders Lane / Purbrook Way to join the Hermitage Stream at Corhampton Crescent.

There are persistent problems associated with the grills protecting the culverts under Middle Park Way, Dunsbury Way and Purbrook Way which require a programme of regular cleansing by the Environment Agency. This problem is especially acute in the autumn if the heavy leaf fall associated with the indigenous hard wood trees is accompanied by periods of heavy rainfall. In particular the blinding of the triple grills protecting the triple 24 inch diameter culverts at Purbrook Way causes flooding of the adjoining highway, even though a realignment of the stream including a flood retention area were provided north of Purbrook Way at Riders Lane open space in 1983. A possible long-term solution to this problem could be to increase the capacity of the culvert under Purbrook Way to a size which would include for the removal of the grills. This would have to be carried out along with improvements to the down-

stream section of the Riders Lane Stream between Purbrook Way and the Hermitage Stream to ensure that there would be adequate provision for any increased flow.

Flooding can also occur upstream of the brick arched bridges in the northern part of Great Copse and adjoining Dunsbury Way (the latter causing overtopping and closure of Dunsbury Way on a number of occasions on 2000/1), and at the southern end of Great Copse where an undersized culvert provides a vehicular and pedestrian access across the stream from High Lawn Way.

The headwaters of this Stream are likely to be incorporated into the proposed Havant Thicket Reservoir currently being promoted by Portsmouth Water Company on land north of Middle Park Way.

Riders Stream grill at Dunsbury Way – clear – blocked and resultant flood

Riders Stream grill at Purbrook Way

Grill blocked with flow going across Purbrook Way - but fun for the kids!

BROOKSIDE ROAD STREAM – This main river has its source in the syncline valley to the north east of Portsdown Hill in an area of Upper Chalk deposits the remainder being predominantly London Clay. The open downland falls steeply to the east crossing under the A3M – where the main river designation starts – and on to Brooklands Road where it enters culverts which outfall at Brookside Road. The original stream no longer exists between Brooklands Road and Brookside Road, having been enlarged and piped to deal with the increased flows generated by the urbanisation of the area. Although the original pipe was designed to take the combined flows of both the adjoining housing conurbation and the stream it was necessary to duplicate it for part of its length in an attempt to alleviate flooding to property in Brooklands Road and Brookside Road. From Brookside Road the stream continues in open channel south under Bidbury Lane and then separates into two branches as it crosses open land, one being the original stream and the other a man-made irrigation ditch controlled by a private sluice gate. Rejoining north of the railway the stream is culverted under the railway and Mill Lane issuing in Portsmouth Water Company land where it joins the Hermitage Stream at the Old Mill Dam.

ORDINARY WATERCOURSES – These are the responsibility of their landowners. In the late spring and autumn the ordinary watercourses of the catchment tend to become choked as a result of prolific weed growth. This can lead to flooding of adjoining land and property if they are not cut back on a regular annual basis in the spring and autumn. The situation can become further exacerbated in the autumn by the heavy leaf fall associated with the indigenous hardwood trees that remain on the routes of the ordinary watercourses and especially in the heavily wooded areas. On certain reaches deliberate obstruction of the watercourse is experienced.

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL RIPARIAN OWNERSHIP – The Borough currently owns the St Clare's open space which it purchased from Portsmouth City Council in April 1992 and has a budget to meet its riparian obligations.

Future Aspiration

Environment Agency 2013

The Environment Agency is working with partners to restore the Hermitage Stream in Leigh Park, Havant in stages to return as much of the stream as possible to a more natural condition. This process started in the early 2000s with restoration of the section between Middle Park Way and just south of Purbrook Way, with new landscaping, paths and cycle routes alongside a much more natural stream which has attracted a wide variety of wildlife. An active Friends of the Hermitage Stream community group supports the Agency and the Council in managing and maintaining the Stream by running working parties and community events. Over time the Agency will be looking to further remove the concrete that currently lines the channel along further reaches north and south of the existing restored section, creating new footpaths and enhancing the open spaces nearby. At the end of the project we could have up to 3km of continuous, accessible natural-river linking Bedhampton with Dunsbury Park with the habitat, flow, biodiversity and water quality all greatly improved.

Riders Lane Stream causes flooding in Corhampton Crescent, 26 October 1949.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Borough of Havant

NEW LIFE FOR HERMITAGE STREAM

Hermitage Stream Restoration Project

Hermitage Stream – Park Community School Reach – Chalton Crescent Reach – Barncroft Way Reach

Hermitage Stream Restoration Project

Havant Borough Council launched the Hermitage Stream Initiative in 1992 to improve the environment of the open spaces bordering the Hermitage Stream in Leigh Park for the benefit of the community. The National Rivers Authority, now the Environment Agency has become a major partner in the Initiative, and attention is now being focused on the river itself.

The project is about to move into a new and exciting phase, involving the restoration of the Hermitage Stream.

What is the Environment Agency?

The Environment Agency is a new organisation set to become one of the world's foremost environmental regulators. Our aim is to provide comprehensive environmental management, protection and enhancement by combining the regulation of land, air and water.

The formation of the Agency involved merging the expertise of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution and the Waste Regulation Authorities, to create a body able to provide high quality environmental protection and improvement.

Why is the Agency Involved in the Hermitage Steam?

The Agency's responsibilities include preserving and improving the quality of rivers, conserving and enhancing the river environment and maintaining adequate levels of flood defence. The Hermitage Stream has been identified as a watercourse which could benefit significantly from restoration, as it was straightened and lined with concrete during a previous flood protection scheme.

Restoring Rivers

Staff joining the new Agency have considerable experience of working with local partner organisations to create innovative river restoration schemes which aim to bring long term benefits to local communities.

How Does the Environment Agency Work on these Projects?

The Environment Agency aims to:

Ensure that an appropriate level of flood defence is maintained
Improve the quality of rivers and their surroundings
Restore rivers wherever possible to a more natural state
Create habitat for wildlife
Improve recreation opportunities
Partnership with the Community
The Environment Agency aims to work with local communities. Links are established with groups representing local people and public consultation plays a major part in all projects. This continues throughout a project, from design, through construction and to completion when communities can enjoy the fruits of these partnerships.

Wherever possible it is hoped that local schools can become involved throughout the life of the project.

The Hermitage Stream Project

A Major Feature

The Hermitage Stream is a significant landscape feature of Leigh Park and provides a green corridor through the built-up environment. Restoration of the stream and it$ surrounds provides an exciting opportunity to greatly improve the landscape and visual amenity of the area around the Hermitage Stream.

A Safer Stream

Fencing erected to screen the channel to prevent children from accessing parts of the channel with steep banks has frequently been breached, abused and vandalised. By creating a more natural river with gently sloping banks, the Hermitage Stream will become a safer more accessible environment.

What's Happened So Far?

A feasibility study was undertaken and concluded that it was possible to restore the Hermitage Stream to a more natural channel and still maintain a.n

appropriate level of flood defence, hi the autumn of 1995 Landscape architects were commissioned to produce a visualisation of an initial project area between the Park Community School and Barncroft Way showing plans of the stream before and after the proposed restoration.

What Happens Next?

The Environment Agency and Havant Borough Council are taking the lead in a major restoration effort which will create a safer, more natural river from the concrete channel. The river restoration project proposes to restore the Hermitage Stream from Park Community School in the north to Barncroft Way in the south.

Benefits to the Community

Among the many benefits which this project will bring to the area of Leigh Park over the next few years are:

An improved environment for wildlife with shallow pools and gravel riffles in the stream

New habitats to attract species such as kingfisher, heron, frogs, toads, minnows, sticklebacks, butterflies, dragonflies and much more.

Opening up of the river environment for recreational purposes with footpaths and footbridges making the river a more enjoyable amenity for the community.

Improved visual appearance of the area with enhancement of the river environment and planting around the edges of the open spaces.

An education and community resource for environmental study by schools and local conservation groups.

The continuation of appropriate standards of flood defence.

Make Sure You Have Your Say

The Environment Agency and Havant Borough Council want everyone in the Leigh Park area to know about the planned restoration of the stream and

would like as many groups as possible to get involved in the project. The Hermitage Stream Initiative has already involved local groups in tree planting, designing the footpath way markers and developing a woodland trail.

We like to hear:

any project ideas you may have; or

views you may have on the Hermitage Stream River Restoration during any stage of the scheme's progress

Proposals

A) Park Community School Reach

This reach extends from (Park House Farm Way to Middle Park Way and is largely within the grounds of Park Community School.

Proposed Works:

Removal of concrete bed and banks
Relocation of fencing by the Park Community School side of the stream reach
Lowering and regrading of the bank to improve safety and create a habitat for

wildlife
Creation of pond areas
Opportunity for a pond dipping platform if desired
Riverside planting
Creation of a nature trail

Since the proposal was drawn up the section of the cycleway along the Hermitage Stream going to Dunsbury Hill has been constructed through Park Community School grounds thus preventing any work here. However it has been suggested that some environmental scheme could be possible in the stream.

(B) Chalton Crescent Reach

This reach extends from Middle Park Way to the junction of Hermitage Stream with a tributary south of Purbrook Way.

Proposed Works:

Removal of concrete bed and banks
Removal of existing fencing
Lowering and regrading of the banks to a gentle angle to create safer river borders and encourage the development of wildlife habitat
Creation of meanders with sections of the former course retained as flood by-pass channels and areas of habitat diversity
Creation of a footpath along the river
Planting of marginal aquatic vegetation such as water iris, water mint, common reeds and reed mace; (bulrush), trees and shrubs'
Improvement of the skate boarding area

Original concreted section through the Chalton Crescent reach

Hermitage Stream - restored Chalton Crescent reach

The Hermitage Stream after heavy rainfall – Chalton Crescent and Barncroft Way bridge

Wildlife along
Hermitage Stream
Wildlife that can be found in Leigh Park
Hermitage Stream forms an important wildlife corridor as it provides a range of habitats that attract different wildlife some of which is of high conservation concern.
The stream provides a habitat for fish and invertebrates. Non-migratory species of fish such as the Bullhead are found at this site.
The habitats provide good conditions for bats. Daubenton's bat are often seen skimming over the stream. The water itself is also important because it allows them to rehydrate and attracts flying insects for them to feed on.
Numerous bird species have been identified along this restored section. Of the bird species identified, two are of high conservation concern (Marsh Tit and House Sparrow) and seven of medium conservation concern (Grey Wagtail, Dunnock, Mistle Thrush, Green Woodpecker, Mallard, Little Egret and Willow Warbler).
Please help us to look after the stream by putting litter, especially food and dog waste in the bins provided.
Marsh Tit
Bullhead Fish
Daubenton's Bat
Little Egret
Havant

One of two interpretation boards

Wildlife along the Hermitage Stream

Wildlife that can be found in Leigh Park

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Daubenton’s Bat (Myotis daubentonii)

This Eurasian bat species has been seen stretched from Britain to Japan and all the places in between, has a lifespan of 22years, and is named after the French naturalist Louis-Jean-Marie Daubenton.

Daubenton’s is a small/medium sized bat growing to roughly 55mm long, and having a wingspan of between 240 to 275mm wide they have a small mass of only between 7 and 15 grams and have brown fur along their back, and silvery grey undersides, with juveniles being darker, and growing lighter with age. The nose and eye area are fur less, and is a reddy-pink colour. When the bat becomes agitated, it sticks its ears at right angles, and the membranes grow darker

Daubenton’s bat lives in colonies in woodland environments next to rivers and lakes, where there prey species live (water dwelling insects). During summer the colonies take to tunnels and under bridges and underground caves, but still being close to water. They also hibernate in similar habitats

As with all bats they locate their prey with echolocation, and their prey consists of small flies, midges, mayflies, and moths.

Wildlife Aspects

Nick Knight

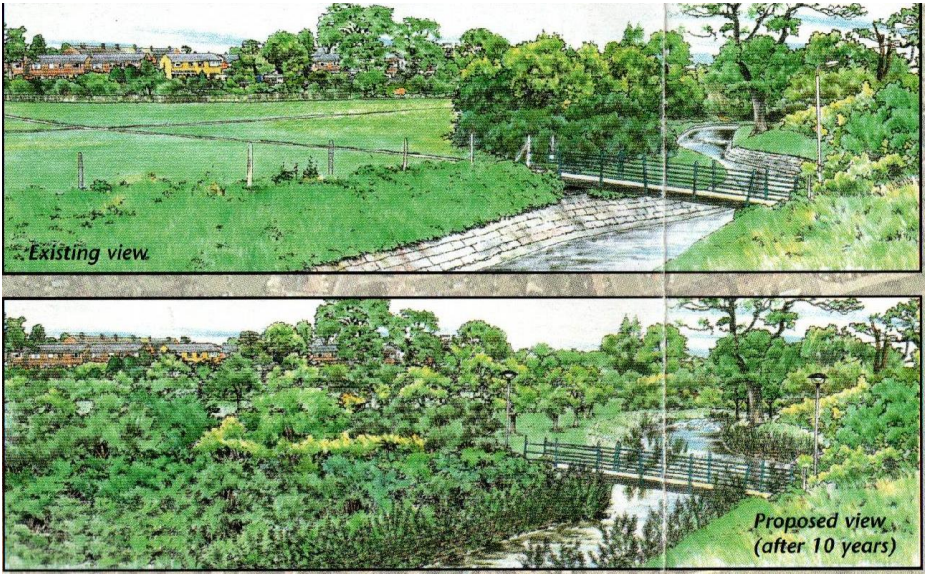
The Hermitage Stream and its tributaries are important for wildlife as the proportion of undeveloped land is low in this predominantly urban landscape. In particular, these watercourses and their surrounding vegetation offer significant corridors for the movement of our wild animals, reaching out to the Queen's Enclosure, Johnston's Coppice, Bell's Coppice and Havant Thicket. Much of this activity goes on completely unnoticed by the public, especially where nocturnal mammals are involved. The survival of these corridors in an uninterrupted state is important for the survival of Havant's natural heritage.
The bankside vegetation in the more natural reaches of the watercourses supports a good variety of insect species which, in turn, are food for insectivorous birds and bats.

The Borough of Havant is particularly rich in the number of bat species recorded here in recent years, including significant populations of national rarities. Many of these are threatened by unsympathetic development. Our smaller and rarer bat species are especially vulnerable to disruption of their commuting corridors by artificial illumination, which they are reluctant to cross.

Bats that have been recorded in this water catchment include the very rare Bechstein's, alcathoe and western barbastelle, plus the unusual Brandt's, whiskered and Leisler's bat species. Former 19th century Leigh Park Estate cottages continue to this day to offer a maternity roost site for the uncommon serotine bat, which are able to commute to Great Copse and the Staunton Country park to forage. Daubenton's bats forage over the lakes in Staunton Country Park and must use commuting routes to reach other water bodies in the district. The progress in recent years to reverse the canalisation of the streams can be expected to improve the habitats for our commoner bats, such as the common and soprano pipistrelles which are quite abundant in this area.

Restored Chalton Crescent Reach

(B) Barncroft Way Reach



This reach extends from the tributary adjacent south of Purbrook Way to Barncroft Way bridge.

Proposed Works:

Removal of concrete banks and channel bed
Re-grading of the banks of the watercourse for safety and improved wildlife potential
Creation of a pond area with seats and interpretation boards
Creation of a trim trail

Unrestored Barncroft Reach

Unrestored section at Barncroft Way bridge

After heavy rainfall excess water from the Lavant Stream enters the Hermitage Stream near to Barncroft Way bridge via a divert culvert from Crosland Drive.

Contact:

The Conservation Officer, Environment Agency Hampshire and Isle of Wight Area Office, Sarum Court, Sarum Road, Winchester, Hants S022 SDP Tel (01962) 713267

Landscape Architect, Havant Borough Council Civic Offices, Civic Centre Road, Havant, Hants P09 2AX Tel. (023) 446536

Partners in the Hermitage Stream Initiative

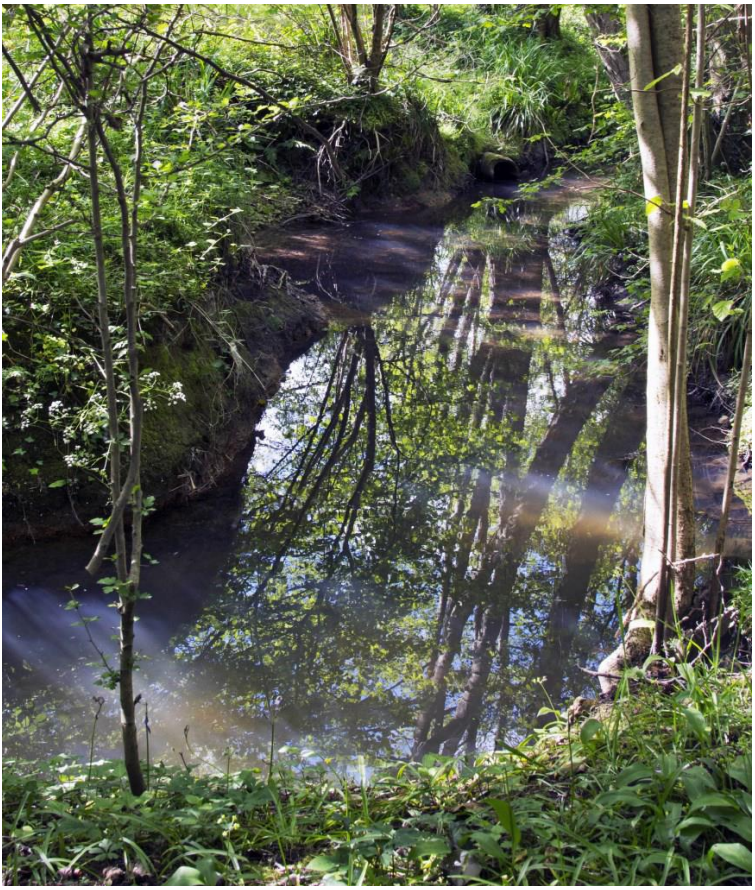
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Borough of Havant

Organisations involved in the Project with the Environment Agency and Havant Borough Council include:

Friends of Hermitage Stream
Leigh Park Conservation Volunteers
Greenspace Community Environment Programme
Park Community School
Hampshire County Council
Portsmouth City Council
Southern Water Services
English Nature

Friends of the Hermitage Stream



What we do

The Friends of the Hermitage Stream is a group made up of local residents and community figures who aim to look after and promote the Hermitage Stream and surrounding areas. The group meets up regularly to plan activities and campaigns that improve the stream and the surrounding environment. We also aim to encourage families and local Schools enjoy and learn about the stream and its natural heritage. We are always looking for new members and you can get involved in the group as much or as little as you want, it could be by helping with the practical work, supporting schools, fund-raising or promoting the group. If you would like more information or would like to discuss how you can get involved then please contact us.

Tel: 023 9264 6743 / 07758915110
Mail to: hermitagestream@gmail.com
Facebook: Friends of the Hermitage Stream

For more information on the stream see our website
www.hermitagestream.co.uk

Practical Volunteering

One way you can get involved is by volunteering on our practical work days. The group meets up every Thursday to undertake tasks that improve the biodiversity and access along the stream.

Typical tasks include restoring footpaths, litter picks and removing invasive species. All the tools are provided, you just need to bring clothing and boots you don't mind getting dirty plus plenty of enthusiasm! As we work on different sites, mostly in Leigh Park, we usually contact the volunteers at the beginning of the week to remind where to meet. The work sessions usually start at 10am and finish by 1pm.

Some Parts of the Hermitage Stream

Hermitage Open Space is the result of restoration work undertaken by the Environment Agency that removed the concrete banks and reverted this part of the stream to a more natural state

Great Copse, another surviving fragment of the Forest of Bere, in more recent times was part of the Staunton Estate. Also nearby **Clare's Copse** offers a beautiful place to view wildlife.

Queens Inclosure is one source of the Hermitage Stream and a remnant of the Forest of Bere.

Bushy Lease is a hidden haven for wildlife, this area has plenty of opportunities for spotting different species including deer, slow worm and Kingfishers.

Dee Tupper pulling Himalayan Balsam at Bushy Lease to add to the pile collected by Friends on a Thursday work day.

The Friends cutting reeds

Pupils of Barncroft School looking for wildlife in the area planted by the Friends

Community Pay Back Team assisted Friends to clear Himalayan Balsam

The Friends arrange river dipping sessions with children. It is hoped to be able to provide a proper platform for them.

Alan Westbrook handing over to Dee Tupper the mower donated to the Friends by Postcode Publications. Tony Tupper putting the mower to good use clearing a burnt out motor bike.

Flora and fauna along the stream identified by Friends

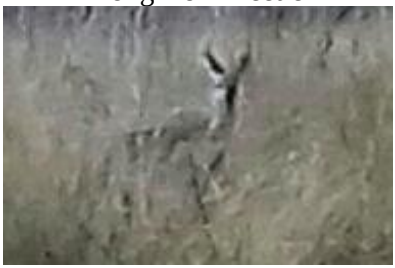
Little Egret

House Martin

Wasp Spider

Long Horn Beetle

Fox



Deer

Heron

Micro moth, small purple and gold

May Bug

Wild Garlic

Himalayan Balsam

Kingfisher

Corn Cockle

Hover Fly

Damsel Fly

Comma Butterfly

Mallard Ducks and Magpie

Painted Lady Butterfly

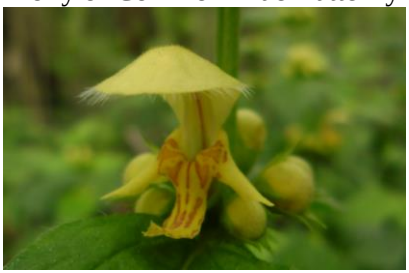
Green Shield Bug

Red Soldier Beetle

Dog Rose

Holly or Common Blue Butterfly

7-Spot Ladybird



Weasel-Snout Flower

Jay

Green Woodpecker

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Common Sandpiper

Grey Wagtail

House Martin

Bullhead

Minnow

Stream Life

Bullhead, stickleback, baby eels, leaches, red worms, water scorpions, caddis fly larvae, water skaters, water scorpion, mayfly larvae, water snails, leeches, stonefly larvae, shrimps

Birds

Little egret, moorhen, magpie, heron, jackdaw, kestrel, mistle thrush, spotted woodpecker, swift, wren, pied wagtail, great tits, gold finch, robin, blackbird, chiffchaff (heard singing), house sparrows, woodpigeons, carrion crow, mallard (seen earlier in the year), woodpigeon, starling, collared dove, herring, black-headed gulls also fly over.

Flowers

Himalayan balsam, hogweed, stinging nettle, goose grass, reeds, dock, plantain sp, dandelion, daisy, knotgrass 2sp, white clover, buttercup sp, cinquefoil/barren strawberry, mayweed, yellow iris, shepherds purse, cow parsley, bindweed 2 sp, marsh mallow, purple vetch, bulrush, sedge, small thistles, chives,ox eye daisy, reeds, bluebells, primroses, dog rose, daffodils (garden escapes) , forget-me-not, wild garlic, mallow, iris, teasel, daisy, knapweed, vetches plant, mint.

Trees and shrubs

Willow, hazel, sycamore, oak, cherry, elder, ash, hawthorn, bramble, ivy, honeysuckle, buddleia, silver birch, dogwood, dog rose, field maple, sloe, cherry

Butterflies

Small tortoiseshell, comma, red admiral, peacock, cabbage white, small blue, small brown

Wildlife

Fox, deer, squirrels, bats, rats,

In the wildflower area

Knapweed, buttercup 2sp, dock, plantains 2 sp, white clover, cranesbill, willow herb, bumble bees, small and large sp, ox-eye daisy, wild carrot, cinquefoil/false strawberry. There are a great many grass species as well, not identified.

A Suggested Management Plan for St Clare's Copse

Elements of this plan could be applied to the whole Hermitage Stream area

St Clare's Copse and the Park Lane Stream

1. Introduction

This plan has been written by Gavin Hughes, a volunteer at Groundwork South, in consultation with Kevin Dewitt, Community Project Officer at Groundwork South (Gosport Office) working on the 'Go With the Flow' Heritage Lottery Fund project in Leigh Park, Havant, Hampshire.

It has been compiled over the summer of 2014, with the aim of addressing the lack of maintenance and management plans for the areas concerned in the 'Go With the Flow' project realm. It wishes to offer a framework for a more structured and rigorous approach to the management and maintenance of the areas of Leigh Park influenced by the Go With the Flow project, in order to

promote a healthy landscape for the future, thus bowing to social, environmental and economic factors and concerns.

The following people have been consulted on Leigh Park and this Plan:
Local Councillors Ralph Cousins, Yvonne Weeks and Mike Fairhurst.
Local residents
Environment Agency
Havant Borough Council Officers.
Staunton Country Park

2. Description & Topography

The site is largely rectangular, and occupies a shallow valley approximately 150 m in width and 350 m in length, with a stream approximately 2 m wide running north south through the site. It is mainly wooded with many native deciduous tree and hedge plants. There is a gravel path running north south, west side, next to the stream. Calshot road runs along a large bank at the north of the site and the stream runs under the bank via a tunnel.

3 The Community at Present

Leigh Park was originally intended to be built as a new town based along Garden City principles. However, the full plans never came to fruition and Leigh Park instead became at one point the largest housing estate in Europe. The town was characterised by social housing and mixed land ownership and associated issues that have arisen from this include negative perception by some residents living in Leigh Park and 'outsiders', disjointed management of green spaces, anti-social behaviour and low levels of interest in surrounding heritage.

The Leigh Park area and Hermitage Stream have undergone significant changes over the last 100 years, particularly after the Second World War, to accommodate new housing development. This included a programme of channel straightening works and creation of new concrete channels. The adjacent open spaces, physical habitat of the river, hydromorphology (depth, width, flow and structure) and the water quality have all been adversely affected as a result of the modifications. These pressures, along with increased

development, have combined impacts that are detrimental to biodiversity and the availability and quality of green open space in Leigh Park. A public footpath runs along the Park Lane stream section. The area is misused by a number of dog walkers with bags of waste in trees and on the path. The bank side vegetation here also attracts fly tipping.

Leigh Park has large areas of amenity grassland but few areas of quality green infrastructure. The management plan will link Leigh Park internally, creating quality green infrastructure and a sense of place in the estate. It also will link Leigh Park externally and draw people in and allow residents to be more outward looking.

5, Plant Species

Trees; Alder, Ash, Cherry, Elder, Oak, Sycamore

Shrubs: Bramble/Blackberry, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Holly

Plants and Flowers: Fern, fungi, anemone, celandine, ivy, nettle, dock, wood anenome

Wildlife Species List: Yellow/ white butterfly, comma, bumble bee

6. SWOT Analysis

Strengths - the site has potential to attract and accommodate more people for leisure and recreation use. The stream can play more of an active role in people's use of the site. There are a number of natural clearings on site, useful for walks and talks, giving presentations and as meeting or reference points. Natural slopes add interest and character to the site and its surrounds, allowing potential for interesting planting. There are play facilities nearby for younger children. If access and perception of security of the site were improved, perhaps these youngsters could be enthused to explore the site further.

Weaknesses - the site does suffer from litter and also the possibility of anti-social behaviour. Litter and lack of heavy maintenance may discourage use of the site, plus the perception of it being dark and unsafe in places.

Opportunities - include an improved maintenance schedule. The development

of improved meeting places/clearings e.g. benches, log seats, notice boards, play equipment and also more colourful and engaging planting, especially seasonal/low groundcover planting. Children enjoy playing in the stream. Close proximity of dwellings means residents are quite likely to use the site, if further improved and maintained and perhaps a stronger sense of community and ownership of the site could be instilled. Social and community events could encourage this.

Threats – a greater budget may be needed for improved works, which could be difficult to achieve. However, with a strong and cohesive action plan, with achievable and measurable results, this obstacle might be overcome.

Management and Maintenance Aims and Objectives

1. To Promote a healthy landscape, one that will thrive and develop into the future.

Regular maintenance - collect litter, sharps, rubbish, logs, trolleys of paths and stream.
Maintain Trees and Canopy
Maintain Paths
Strim edges
Cut back hedge/shrubs encroaching pathways and open areas

2. To promote Ecological diversity in plants and animals e.g. interesting plants, interesting wildlife, for added landscape value. Add native wildflowers. Add aesthetic flowers of interest.

Add plants, flowers, shrubs, especially (seasonal) groundcover planting.
Open canopy for light and create more clearings. This aids security and adds interest.

3. To promote human interaction with St Clare's Copse.

Advertise Community events

Increase access
Increase awareness
Friends of groups

Youth and Education
Recreational space

4. To promote custodial value and a sense of stewardship to the site e.g. reduce litter and vandalism.

Friends of groups
Management plans
Maintenance plans (both private and public)
Groundwork activities and events
Public use of the site

5. To add educational elements to the site, for educating the public about wildlife, plants, landscape value, ecological and ecosystem value. Allow them to enjoy the site.

Organise school activities, groups and events
Organise events for the general public
Nature walks for adults and children
Interest boards, notice boards
Make use of clearings
Outdoor classroom, seating, logs
Well-kept walks, pathways, routes, access and clearings

6. To allow the site to grow into a lush and diverse, ecologically rich, plant playground, i.e. add rich planting of interest – colour, texture and smell. To change the character into an aesthetically pleasing valley of plant interest and colour for the local community.

E.g. Additional Planting: Primula/Primroses ,Wild garlic, Bluebell
Native riparian/riverine aesthetic planting. Lush River valley.
Add extra plants and flowers

Facilitate a breeding ground, healthy growing environment
Open canopy

7. Manage the tree population. Coppice or cut back dead trees. Store dead wood on site for eco/wildlife/habitat value. Allow young trees two- to five-

years-old to thrive and develop and grow into maturity. Revisit the younger species in five years to decide what needs thinning, removing and keeping. Three tiered planting desirable, woodland canopy, tall and low shrubs, ground cover. There is a lack of rich groundcover on the site. More sunlight will be let in due to coppicing work, dappled sunlight, sun and shade areas.

Tree Management Plan
Open canopy
Increase access
Tidy and maintain

Method and Action Plan

Utilise site landscape maintenance plan –- decide upon who will carry out the plan, when, why, how and exactly what maintenance work needs to be carried out. Decide what is to be achieved by the maintenance actions. E.g. social aspects, collect litter, improve access, security, increased use of the site, educational value, wildlife/ecological value. As part of the plan, list improvements, new actions, omissions – evaluate the actions undertaken, decide if further action is needed/not needed.

Plan and develop sessions that will increase the awareness of the site.
Adult education and educating children about ecological, landscape and plant resources, natural history and the natural environment. Help to nurture a sense of stewardship and aim to lessen or discourage anti-social behaviour.

Research the possibility of adding new soft landscape aspects, seasonal planting, interest and character planting, for ecological diversity and engagement. The services of a Landscape Architect may be required.

Research the possibility of adding new hard landscape aspects such as new and improved outdoor seating, notice and information boards or an outdoor classroom. The services of a landscape architect may be required.

Utilise site Tree maintenance plan - to be drawn up or to follow a similar or existing plan from another site. Complex work to be carried out by competent tree staff.

Determine any other actions deemed necessary for the site and not included in this plan.

IN SHORT: Aims and Objectives

Healthy landscape – regular maintenance
Promote ecological diversity – add planting, open canopy
Promote human interaction – Groundwork and community activities, recreational space facilities – benches, clearings, notice boards, information boards, nature walks, school exercises.
Promote sense of stewardship – public use of site, access, through 1, 2 and 3
Add educational elements – facilities/outdoor classroom? School events? Meeting place? Clearings? Information boards?
Healthy landscape & promote ecological diversity – add planting, open canopy
Manage Tree Population to Specification

SECTION THREE – Maintenance Schedules

Aims for First Year (To be continued, added to. amended or removed for the following years).

Aim

Cut & maintain pathway edge vegetation in the growing months to allow a clearer, safer and less obstructed path. Use strimmers or slashers, according to volunteer groups and needs.
Collect litter along main pathways, plus any obvious litter in the vicinity.
Clean, clear and maintain the stream to allow a free flow and remove unwanted/unsightly debris – from shopping bags to shopping trolleys, bottles, packets etc.
Also maintain the grate at the southern end of the site, to remove large and dangerous objects and reduce the likelihood of flooding.
Maintain tree cover, including with volunteers, according to Havant Borough Council Tree Officer
Vegetation plan, to include any additional planting deemed suitable for ecological diversity, keeping a healthy site and adding interest with colour,

texture, smell, leaf shape etc.

Maintenance – Areas to Maintain

The litter in the stream
Larger debris in the stream/ tree waste

The Woods
Tree maintenance
Coppicing
Thinning
Removal of dead/ dangerous/ decaying wood and unwanted species: suckers/saplings, ash/sycamore/birch/rhododendron, non-native
Extra planting? – Vision/aim, groundcover, shrub, tree cover.

The Path

Litter
Clear ground vegetation and cut sides of shrubs from edges
Relaying
Waste Wood/Log Piles in designated areas along the side of the stream

Job List

Clear the paths of litter.
Clear the edges of the path of overgrowing vegetation, on the ground and from bushes and shrubs, e.g. hedge cut and strim.
Clear the steam of litter. Keep in good order. Keep clean.
Maintain flow of stream through the site. Remove and cut any natural waste/wood/branches and shopping trolleys that are clogging/restricting the flow. Especially important in high rainfall periods/flooding.
Re-patch and relay the path when needed.

Maintain the bridges and infrastructure. Keep safe, secure, strong and in good working order. Bridges, grate, steps. Keep maintained so as to avoid accidents, trips, falls, slips. Check nuts and bolts, fixtures, fittings, fastenings, galvanising, loose parts, broken parts. Broken, damaged, rotten, need replacing/protection?

Remove branches and vegetation that restricts access through the site and that may cause injury etc.
Keep branches to 8ft above ground along pathways, leave enough headroom.
Maintain larger tree cover. Maintain as per aims and objectives in management plan. E.g. thinning, coppicing, replanting, removal of unwanted or invasive species. Removal of dead/ dangerous/ decaying branches, removal of suckers/saplings, ash/sycamore/birch/rhododendron and non-native species. Extra planting, groundcover, shrub, tree cover.
Designate areas for waste/log piles/habitats/dead hedges along the stream length.

Schedule of Works

Throughout the Year

Clear the paths of litter.
Clear the steam of litter. Keep in good order. Keep clean.
Maintain flow of stream through the site. Remove and cut any natural waste/wood/branches and shopping trolleys that are clogging/restricting the flow. Especially important in high rainfall periods/flooding.
Remove branches and vegetation that restricts access through the site and that may cause injury etc.
Keep branches to 8ft above ground along pathways, leave enough headroom.

Spring

Clear the edges of the path of overgrowing vegetation, on the ground and from bushes and shrubs, e.g. hedge cut and strim.

Summer

Re-patch and relay the path when needed.
Clear the edges of the path of overgrowing vegetation, on the ground and from bushes and shrubs, e.g. hedge cut and strim.
Maintain larger tree cover. Maintain as per aims and objectives in mgt plan. E.g. thinning, coppicing, replanting, removal of unwanted or invasive species. Removal of dead/ dangerous/ decaying branches, removal of suckers/saplings, ash/sycamore/birch/rhododendron and non-native species. Extra planting,

groundcover, shrub, tree cover.

Autumn

Maintain flow of stream through the site. Remove and cut any natural waste/wood/branches and shopping trolleys that are clogging/restricting the flow. Especially important in high rainfall periods/flooding.
Designate areas for waste/log piles/habitats/dead hedges along the stream length.

Winter

Maintain flow of stream through the site. Remove and cut any natural waste/wood/branches and shopping trolleys that are clogging/restricting the flow. Especially important in periods of high rainfall / flooding.

The Havant borough Draft Core Strategy makes the following comments that support the case for the immediate progression of this project:

2.19: A green infrastructure strategy is currently being developed by PUSH (The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire). This strategy will identify a network of accessible green spaces of different types, particularly those that are well linked, inland and along the coast, combined with benefits for communities with deprivation and health needs, in particular Leigh Park.

2.23: Despite the proximity of countryside and the natural harbours, the use of footpaths and bridleways has declined over three consecutive years up to 2007 as indicated in the Quality of Life Hampshire 2008 report. Havant Borough Council is the only district where such a significant problem has occurred. For this reason the network of paths for walking should be promoted for greater use and improvement. The extension of the network of paths will not only provide opportunities for increasing recreation but also improve access to services and as an alternative to using cars. The improvement to the cycle network has been identified as a strategic infrastructure project which will be implemented with the involvement of partners such SUSTRANS and the County Council. Improvements to the stream corridors will strengthen the strategic links between the Solent and Staunton Country Park and Havant Thicket and will be an essential element of the boroughs Green Infrastructure.

The possibility of a cycle way between Middlepark Way and Stockheath Lane is currently being investigated. The area should be a vital part of the borough's Walking to Health initiative.

The argument for the refurbishment, reinstatement and promotion of the Staunton Way from Staunton Country Park to the coast is clearly made.

2.26: At a strategic level the co-ordination in improvements along the stream valleys is relevant for delivering the Core Strategy, especially walking and cycling, biodiversity conservation, flood control and landscape improvements.

2.29: The sustainable extension of Staunton Country Park by the development

of recreation and leisure attraction centred on the Havant Thicket Reservoir will provide a major regional park. This will contribute to the image of the borough as an important provider of countryside recreation.

Similarly consideration should be given to extending Staunton Country Park to include the whole of the Hermitage Stream Area.

7.14: Hedgerows, road verges, river valleys, farmland and gardens and open spaces in urban areas act as local wildlife habitats and these form an important part of the overall wildlife diversity of the borough.

7.46: Havant's... open spaces... network of street patterns and landmarks... spaces associated with the borough's historic centres... valued open spaces and green corridors including the Hermitage Stream... well-designed spaces are not something that should just be associated with the past. Good design must be championed.

7.49: Essentially public spaces can be described as well-designed when; They are useful and easy to care for.

You can find your way and move around easily, regardless of whether or not you are disabled, in a place in which you feel safe

The people who live there tell you that their quality of life has improved, and they continue to say this over time.

People tell you that they are proud of where they live because their place (space) has real identity and beauty.

Play Features in the Hermitage Stream Open Space

Willow den

Two carved log seats

Play goals

‘Dragonfly’

Swinging seat

Meeting point

Playground maintained by Portsmouth City Council

Desirable Works

Fit more robust gates to deter traveller invasions

Barncroft Way

Stockheath Lane

Replace bridge at Barncroft Way with a safer design such as that at Corhampton Crescent.

Erect ‘No Fly Tipping’ signs with suitable wording.

Reinforce dog fouling signs.

The Staunton Way, Right of Way No. 506b

The Staunton Way was opened in April 1993 by the Duke of Gloucester. It ran from the Queen Elizabeth Country Park to the Solent Way It passed through Staunton Country Park and ran through Leigh Park from Middle Park Way to Barncroft Way alongside the Riders Lane and Hermitage Streams.

In about 2008 it was found that the route had been turned back at Staunton Country Park and on enquiring why the following reply, dated 31 July 2008, was received from Barry Lockyer, Access Projects Officer, Countryside Service, Department for Culture, Communities & Rural Affairs:

Approximately three or four years ago we had felt for a long time that the quality of the walk southwards from Staunton Country Park was not of a standard we wished to promote. We looked at other options and finally decided that the easterly route between Queen Elizabeth and Staunton Country Park gave us a better promoted route overall. Walkers can now do either the direct route between the two parks or the slightly longer eastern route or both. In any of these circumstances they can enjoy the facilities at either country park. There are also options for shorter circular routes using links at Chalton and Finchdean, or even figures of eight. All in all far better options; far better scenery.

Is it still a designated footpath. Parts of the deleted route are definitive paths, parts will be tarmac highway/footways.

HCC is responsible for maintaining the surface where it is a publicly maintainable Public Right of Way or main highway.

Adjacent land owners are responsible for keeping it clear of overhanging trees and branches.

Widths should be maintained to what it states on the definitive statement.

A further letter, dated 19 April 2010, was received from Marilyn Meeks, Access Projects Officer, Countryside Service, Department for Culture, Communities & Rural Affairs:

Dear Mr Cousins,

Your enquiry has been passed to me for reply.

As part of revisiting each of our long distance walking routes we take in to consideration comments received from our customers regarding each route on where they can be improved or other interesting information that others may find helpful.

We had received many comments that people felt unhappy with the section from Staunton CP to Emsworth, that it wasn't as interesting as the section to Queen Elizabeth CP. Also waymarks along this section were ether been removed or taken down and put up in strange places on a regular basis.

Prior to changing the route the Long Distance Walking Association were contacted regarding he section to Emsworth that the E9 route followed and the reason for changing were fully understood.

The E9 route doesn't follow promoted routes for its entire length but routes that enables those interested in walking long distance to follow this route and other 'E' routes in the UK and in Europe.

We had been asked by our customers to produce a circular route and the team managing the Staunton Way had already devised the figure-of-8 route that we have today. This allows a number of options on how those wishing to walk this route can take.

It was said that we could call the truncated route by some other name if we wished. Perhaps ‘Hermitage Way’ could be suitable thus giving it some identity.

The route also follows the line of the E9 European Coastal Path which runs from Capo de São Vincenti, Portugal to Narva-Jõesuu, Estonia a length of approximately 5,000km/3,125 miles. For British walkers it links the Saxon Shore Way and South Coast Path in a continuous way marked route of almost 1,000 miles around the coast of southern England from Gravesend to Minehead.

Over time the paths had not been maintained and they became very muddy in wet weather and overgrown.

Over the past few years the Community Pay Back Team have re-laid all of the route with Type 1 material topped off with fines so that it now walkable in all weathers. Overhanging shrubbery and trees have been cut back.

The path is extensively used by dog walkers and those who use it as a convenient off-road walking and cycling short cut to various destinations.

'Opportunity Havant' recognises the importance of this and other paths in Leigh Park in the following statement:

The communities in Leigh Park are connected by the most attractive and user friendly cycleways and footpaths that provide spaces along the routes for people to enjoy the natural environment and socialise.

Walking for Health

All of the Leigh park footpaths are now walkable in all weathers and should be added to the borough 'Walking for Health' programme.

This was recommended in the Leigh Park Consultative Forum meeting of 18 June 2009

Footpaths

Staunton Way paths relaid

Path reinstated at Priorsdean Crescent to link in with cycleway

Path laid in St Clare's Copse alongside Park Lane Stream

The footpath on Chalton Crescent side of the stream had been allowed to be overgrown. Cutting back revealed that the tarmac has become degraded and needs to be re-surfaced. On the other side is the Barncroft Way to Dunsbury Hill cycle path. There needs to be a programme of weed killing on all of these off-road footpaths to stop the weed growth both at the edges and in the run of the paths.

When the areas adjacent to footpaths are gang-mown grass is left on the paths. Not only does this look untidy it becomes slippery in wet weather. Grass should be blown off the same as happens on highway pavements.

Fly tipping and motor bikes

Some of the vast amount of rubbish cleared by the Community Pay Back Team from the backs of houses adjoining the open space area

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC ACT 1988. Section 34
NO MOTORCYCLING
It is a criminal offence to drive any motorcycle on this land.
FINE £1000
TEL: 023 9247 4174

Motor cyclists using all of the paths is a continuing problem which it seems to be difficult to prevent. At least putting signs up would give residents some encouragement to report.